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A HISTORY OF SOLON

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A HISTORY OF OLON, MAINE

By

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A THESIS

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3
PREFACE	6
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION	7
INDIAN HISTORY	10
Later Kennebec Valley Indians	12
EARLY HISTORY	17
Boundaries	17
Land Grants	18
Early Settlers	21
INCORPORATION AND GOVERNMENT HISTORY	26
CHURCH HISTORY	32
Methodist Church	32
Congregational Church	37
South Solon Church	41
TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATION	44
Stage Coach	45
Ferry Boat and Other Forms of Transportation	48
Post Office	49
Other Developments	50

ECONOMIC HISTORY	51
Merchants	51
Manufacturing	52
PROFESSIONAL MEN	55
Physicians	55
Dentist	56
Lawyer	56
EDUCATIONAL HISTORY	57
Secondary Educational History	60
OTHER HISTORICAL ITEMS	64
Military Matters	64
Organizations	66
Newspapers	68
Cemeteries	69
Library History	70
BIBLIOGRAPHY	72

PREFACE

The object of this work is to present and interpret the historical progress of the town of Solon, Maine. This will be done by bringing up to date the social, political, and economic history of the town.

There have been limitations as to the amount of materials available, due to lack of well-kept records, absence of earlier historians, and deterioration of valuable historical papers.

It is the author's humblest wish that this work might in some future day prove to be of some assistance or impetus to further research and writings in this area of the state of Maine.

History of the Town of Solon

Geographical Location

Solon lies in the southern part of Somerset County, sixty-five miles south of the Canadian border and thirty miles north of Fairfield, the southern most town in the county. Solon is bounded on the north by Bingham, on the east by Brighton and Athens, south by Cornville and Madison, and on the west by Embden at the Kennebec River. The center of the village is located one mile east of the Kennebec River at an altitude of four hundred and seven feet above sea level. Parkman Hill, near the center of town, and French Hill, slightly east of the village, are the highest elevations of land in town rising well over seven hundred feet above sea level. In the northeastern part of town lie many small ponds. These include Wentworth Pond, with an area of three quarters of one mile; Rowell Pond, Baker Pond, and Iron Bound Pond all with areas of less than one half square mile. Another pond not widely known is Lost Pond, located near the Kennebec River in the western part of town. This seems to be the only area in town where the pitcher plant grows. Tradition has it that the Indians that frequented this area used this plant for drinking utensils.

The soil of Solon is sandy loam in parts and gravelly loam in others, but with rich land along the Kennebec River. The surface of the land is uneven, varied chiefly by terraces at different levels.

The principal streams of the town are Micheal Stream and Fall Brook, which have supported many small lumber and grist mills along their banks. Micheal Stream originates in a bog at the foot of Parkman Hill and flows to the Kennebec River, crossing Route 201 a mile and a half south of the village. Fall Brook originates at a spring in the back part of Bingham and winds its way through Solon Village to the Kennebec River.

The Kennebec River flows along the western boundary of the town. About one mile above the village is located Caratunk Falls, one of the passages most dreaded by lumbermen and the one crossed by Colonel Benedict Arnold's expedition of 1,100 men to Quebec in 1775. From the journals which were kept by some of the members of Arnold's expedition we get many comments on the falls at Solon. Most of the journals described the falls as being around fifteen feet in height and the water rapid. The riflemen of the expedition reached Caratunk Falls on October 4, 1775. The falls had a pitch of fifteen feet, but the portage was only fifty rods, though very rough.¹

The rear guard, under Maj. Return J. Meigs, reached the falls on October 7, 1775. He describes the river here as "confined between two rocks, not more than 40 rods wide, which lie in piles 40 rods in length on each side of the river. These rocks are polished curiously in some places, by the swift running of the water. The carrying-place here is 433 paces in length".² The rear guard stayed all day of October 8 at "Carratuncus" as it rained all day.³ At this site today stands the Central Maine Power Company's hydroelectric Power Plant.

There are two main highway arteries which pass through Solon. One is highway 201 which enters Solon from the south and is the main highway to Quebec City. The other is Route 201A, which enters Solon from the west coming through the towns of North Anson and Embden and terminates at Solon village.

Solon village is located near Fall Brook within a

¹ Codman, John, *Arnold's Expedition to Quebec*, The MacMillan Co., New York, 1902, p. 52.

² Meigs, Maj. Return J., *Journal of the Expedition Against Quebec*, privately printed by Charles Bushnell in New York, 1864, p. 13.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

mile and a half of the Northern boundary of the town. South Solon, as it is known to natives of Solon, is the area southeast of the village sprawling out into many farms, today, just as it did a hundred years ago. It was this area that was deeded to William Spaulding, a Boston proprietor in 1792 and became known as Spauldingtown.⁴

⁴ Davis, Harrison L., "History of the Town of Solon", 1936, p. 9. (Not published)

INDIAN HISTORY

Before the white man's appearance in Maine history the area which was to become Solon was a vast river wilderness. Waterfalls at Skowhegan and Augusta, which were nearly impassable, separated the upper Kennebec from the few settlements below in the seventeenth century. The Kennebec-Dead River Trail was the age-old Indian route through the land. In the seventeenth century it became the adopted, though difficult, route for the French Jesuit missionaries who traveled south to the Kennebec. It was in 1646 that Father Gabriel Druilletes was sent to the Kennebec to found a mission among the Indians of this area. Leaving Sillery, Quebec on August 29, 1646, with several Indian guides he proceeded to the Indian village of Norridgewock on the Kennebec by canoe and portage. From Norridgewock he moved down river to Cushnoc (Augusta), the site of the Pilgrim trading post and fort. Here he struck up a life-long friendship with John Winslow, Commandant of the post. From Augusta he continued his journey to the sea — the first white man ever known to have traveled overland from Quebec and down the length of the Kennebec to the Maine sea-coast.⁵

Father Druillettes lived among the Indians of the Kennebec at intervening periods between 1646 and 1656. From 1660 to 1680 the Catholic missions on the Kennebec were abandoned due to rivalry with the English at the time. By 1688 the Bigot brothers, Vincent and Jacques, had built a chapel at Narantsouac (Norridgewock) and were resuming the work of Druillettes. In 1694 the mission at Norridgewock came under the leadership of Sebastian Rasle.⁶

The Kennebec came to be the mode of travel for the English fishermen and fur traders, who before 1700,

⁵ Gowing, Peter G., *The Jesuits in Maine*, Orono, 1955 (A Master's Thesis) pp. 53-56.

⁶ Gowing, *Ibid.*, pp. 62-68.

had established trading posts as far north on the river as Cushnoc (Augusta).⁷ As early as 1626 the New Plymouth settlers began to trade with the Kennebec Indians. That year a shallop loaded with corn passed up the river, and returned with 700 pounds of beaver skins and other furs.⁸

Who were the original inhabitants of this Kennebec River wilderness? The oldest Indian culture of the area, according to archeologists, was that of the Red Paint Indian. These Indians lived around the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries according to the latest historical interpretations. Until recently, it was thought that the Red Paint Indians lived many centuries before the Indians of the seventeenth century. But excavations in Bucksport and Ellsworth show that they were the direct ancestors of the historic Indians, and not significantly different from them.⁹

The Red Paint Indians got their name from the fact that all their burials were made with a ranging amount of red or yellow ochre. This red iron oxide, or ochre, is the earthy variety of powdered hematite.¹⁰ Some of the burials contained as much as half a bushel of this red or yellow iron oxide in a single grave. Almost without exception the Red Paint burial grounds were located on sandy or gravelly knolls where digging was easy, and usually near navigable bodies of water.¹¹ This would lead one to believe that they used the rivers and lakes for much of their livelihood.

⁷ Hanson, J. W., *History of Gardiner, Pittston, and West Gardiner*, Gardiner, 1852, p. 37.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁹ Maine Writers Research Club, *Maine Indians in History and Legend*, Portland, 1952, p. 138. (Article written by Mabel Gould Demers).

¹⁰ Moorehead, Warren K., *The Red Paint People of Maine*, (Reprinted from the *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 15, No. 1, Jan.-March, 1913), p. 40.

¹¹ Writers Research Club, *Op. cit.*, p. 138.

According to John Dolan of Solon, an amateur collector of Indian relics in and around Solon and a reasonably reliable source, there has never been found any spears small enough to be classified as arrows. It is his belief, from his findings that the bow and arrow had not yet been adopted by these Indians. Mr. Dolan has also found firestones, rough axes, and slate spears believed to have been used by the Red Paint Indians. These relics were found by him at a Red Paint burial ground about seventy-five yards from the shore of the Kennebec River on a knoll between Solon and Bingham.

This brief description of the Red Paint Indians represents present thinking, but it is quite possible that future excavations will give new and different interpretations.

Later Kennebec Valley Indians

The successors to the Red Paint Indians were those of the Algonquin Nation. All the Indians of Maine belonged to this nation. The Abnakis and Etechemins occupied the present limits of Maine. The Etechemins dwelt from the Penobscot River eastward, and the Abnakis from New Hampshire to the Penobscot. The Abnakis group was divided into four smaller tribes: the Sokokis, on the Saco River; the Anesagunticooks, on the Androscoggin River; the Wawenoes, east of Merrymeeting Bay; and the Kennebecs, from Merrymeeting Bay to Moosehead Lake, on both sides of the Kennebec River. The Kennebecs were subdivided into the Cushnocs at Augusta, Tacconnets at Waterville, and the Norridgewocks at Old Point, located between the present towns of Madison and Norridgewock.¹²

¹² Hanson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

Leger, Sister Mary C., *The Catholic Indian Missions in Maine*, Washington, D. C., 1929.

Starbird, Charles H., *The Indians of the Androscoggin Valley*, Lewiston, 1928.

There can be very little doubt that the Norridgewocks from Old Point frequented the area of what is now Solon for game, fish, and probably for cultivation of the fertile soils along the Kennebec River. Even then Solon was a haven for the hunter and fisherman! Proof that Indians visited this area is shown by the many petroglyphics that, even today, may be found on the ledges that jut out into the Kennebec River just below the present site of the Solon-Embden Bridge. More proof comes from the numerous arrowheads and other Indian relics found in the fields along the Kennebec by the aforementioned John Dolan. So it is quite probable that the Norridgewocks were spearing salmon at Caratunk Falls and raising corn in the nearby fertile fields long before the Europeans sailed upon the Kennebec.

The Kennebec Indians were not fixed in their settlements. They made long hunting and fishing trips traveling the length of the Kennebec in their birch-bark canoes and on foot, whole villages and tribes moving. "The wigwams of their 'happy' villages were to be seen wherever salmon and shad abounded, and wild game was plenty".¹³ Groups of these Kennebec Indians traveled as far north as Mt. Kineo, which was the main source for their flint supply. This particular type of flint is so distinguished from the ordinary flint, that scientists can easily recognize arrowheads, spearheads, or other implements that come from this source.¹⁴ The distance from Solon to Mt. Kineo is over eighty miles. These same Indians traveled to the coast to escape the hot summer weather and mosquitoes, living on shell fish and the fresh-caught salt water fish. Others of the tribe cultivated crops inland, and gathered the fall harvest of nuts and killed flocks of ducks, geese, and other wild fowl on their flights south for the winter.¹⁵

¹³ Hanson, *Ibid.*, p. 16 (The author wonders if they all were happy).

¹⁴ Writers Research Club, *Op. cit.*, p. 1 (article written by Mable R. Holt.)

¹⁵ Dolan, John, (an article on Indians for Solon Sesquicentennial) p. 9.

There is no record or tradition of any Indian settlement within the town limits of Solon, although there have been found many camping places littered with the debris and broken artifacts of the Indians periodic stays near Caratunk Falls.¹⁶

The quality of the pottery fragments found tell us that the Kennebec Indians were not as skilled in this art as their Western fellow-Americans. John Dolan has found "around these old camp grounds, broken spears, pottery, beads, flint knives, hide scrapers and fleshers, fish scalers, sinew fleshers, hide softeners, hoes, spades, axes, and tomahawks".¹⁷

The Kennebec Indians were quite fond of smoking. According to Clarence Day's *History of Maine Agriculture* tobacco was the only crop which the Indian male helped his squaw and children in cultivating. This crop he "considered his own special crop".¹⁸ They made their pipes from clay and pipe stones, a soft type of stone that was easy to work. The Indians of the Kennebec raised other crops as well. To quote from Samuel de Champlain, who spent the winter of 1604-05 at St. Croix Island, "We saw there many (fields of) squashes, pumpkins, corn, and tobacco, which they likewise cultivate".¹⁹

The burial grounds of the Kennebec Indians are in and around the same general areas as the Red Paint Indians. According to John Dolan "the graves were covered by a large bonfire to destroy all scent in order that the body would not be dug up by wolves. It is

¹⁶ Information from John Dolan who has in his possession many of these Indian relics found by himself in and around the town of Solon.

¹⁷ Dolan, John, "Indians of Solon", (an article written for the Solon Sesquicentennial.)

¹⁸ Day, Clarence A., *A History of Maine Agriculture; 1604-1860*, Univ. Press, Orono, 1954, pp. 19-20.

¹⁹ *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain* (ed. by W. I. Grant) New York, 1907, pp. 58-59.

not known if our Maine Indians were sun worshipers or not, but a great many of the burials were made facing the East, or the rising sun."²⁰

Sebastian Rasle, the Jesuit missionary to the Norridgewock Indians for over a quarter of a century, gives the following description of them:

Their cabins were made by planting a center pole and covering it with bark; the fire in the middle on the ground, and their beds and chairs were mats made of reeds, spread upon the earth. The men dressed in the skins of animals or in loose robes of red or blue cloth, and the women wore a mantle, reaching to the middle of the leg, very gracefully arranged with a light covering thrown over the head and falling to the feet, and stockings from the knee to the ankle. Their moccasins were of deerskins. In the winter they wore snowshoes, without which they could not subsist. They were tall, powerful and active, with teeth whiter than ivory. Their only ornaments were beads made of shell, white and black, so arranged in belts and the like as to represent different figures with great beauty. Their children were regarded with the greatest affection and the utmost respect was manifest toward the aged. Their skill with the bow was great; even children could shoot with astonishing accuracy. They ate with great irregularity; feasted upon the best one day and famished the next. Tobacco was used by all and esteemed the greatest luxury. They were less barbarous than other tribes.²¹

Why did the Indians disappear shortly after the coming of the white man? In the first place, the Indian population of the Upper Kennebec was not very large.

²⁰ Dolan, *Op. cit.*, p. 11.

²¹ As quoted in Whitney, S. H., *The Kennebec Valley*, Augusta, 1887. pp, 7-8.

The major reasons for the near extinction of the Indians of this area was the outbreak of war between the English and Indians in 1675, and great amount of malnutrition and starvation among the Indian tribes.²² The war between the French and Indians on one side, and the English on the other, was only the first of six wars fought between them for domination of the northern section of the United States: The first was King Philips War (1675-1685), second was King Williams War (1688-1699), then Queen Anne's War (1703-13), Lovewell's War (1722-1725), King George's War (1745-47), and finally the French and Indian War (1755-1760).²³

The Indians looked to the French to assume control of the territory of the Upper Kennebec, but their hopes were destined to be destroyed during Lovewell's War by the English, who attacked and destroyed the village of Norridgewock and massacred Father Rasle in August of 1724.²⁴

²² Hanson, *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

²³ Hanson, *Ibid.*, pp. 29-30 (as taken from footnote of Williamson's History of Maine.)

²⁴ Hanson, *Ibid.*, pp. 69-71.

Boundaries, Land Grants, Early Settlers and Later Immigrants

Boundaries

By the latter half of the seventeenth century the land east of the Kennebec River was claimed by both the French and the English.

Even before the domination of the English in this territory, King Charles of England in 1665 gave to his brother, the Duke of York later James II, King of England, all the territory between the Atlantic Ocean and the St. John River, and in breadth extending from the mouth of the Kennebec to the St. Croix River. This section was known as the Sagadahoc Territory.²⁵ This was really an encroachment on the Kennebec Patent of 1629 to William Bradford, which had as its northern boundary the southern boundary of the town of Anson.²⁶ Solon lies in the second tier of townships north of the Kennebec Patent and is the first range south of the Bingham Purchase.²⁷ After the Revolutionary War General Knox bought one million acres of land on the upper Kennebec from the state of Massachusetts. Some years later, having secured the Waldo Patent through his marriage, he sold his contract for the one million acres to William Bingham, a Philadelphia businessman.

In 1691 the colony of Plymouth, the Province of

²⁵ Whitney, S. H., *Op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

²⁷ Lincoln, Mary P., "A Historical Background of Solon" (for Sesqui-centennial Celebration).

Maine, the Territory of Sagadahoc with one county of York (Solon was within this territory), and the Massachusetts Bay Colony were all incorporated into the Royal Province of Massachusetts Bay under the charter of William and Mary.²⁸

In 1760 the counties of Cumberland and Lincoln were taken from York County, and separately incorporated. The area which was later to become the town of Solon was then in Lincoln County. Solon was within the county of Kennebec from 1799 to 1809, when Somerset County was separated from Kennebec County.²⁹

Land Grants

Many of the early settlers of Solon came from the towns in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. The author has consulted a few of the town histories of some of these towns and partially answered the question as to why these people, or their ancestors, came to Solon.

Before the Revolutionary War the boundary line between Massachusetts and New Hampshire was in question. Massachusetts figured that the best way to guarantee this area for the future was to repopulate. Thereupon townships were surveyed and sold, or given, to groups of men. Township number one in this line was given in 1735 to sixty men from Salisbury and Amesbury, Massachusetts.³⁰ Names on this deed that became familiar in and around Solon were Stevens, Rowell, Sargent, Bernard, Flanders, and Ordway.

²⁸ Whitney, *Op. cit.*, p. 35.

²⁹ Coburn, Louise, *Skowhegan on the Kennebec*, Skowhegan, p. 13.

³⁰ Butler, Caleb, *The History of the Town of Groton*, Boston, 1883, p. 59.

Royal decision in 1740 declared this grant null and void. By 1749 this area was granted to Captain John Mason from New Hampshire. In the meantime the Salisbury and Amesbury group decided to have Captain Barnard and Nehemiah Ordway petition the General Court of Massachusetts for grant of another township. The General Court of Massachusetts granted the proprietors what was to be one half of the Solon township and the same portion of the Poland township.³¹ This grant was not enacted until the 1790's, so the grant went to either relatives or benefactors of the original proprietors. This so-called Barnard Grant included 11,520 acres.

This, in part, explains why so many of the early settlers in the area came from Salisbury and Amesbury. Among these were Joseph Maynard, Josiah and Moses French, Benjamin Merrill, Asa Buswell, Samuel and Moses Eaton, Enoch Jackman, and Mathew Sanborn.³² It probably explains, also, the reason why the Rowells, Pierces, and Halls came from New Hampshire.

In 1741, when the division line was run between New Hampshire and Massachusetts it was found that a part of Groton was in New Hampshire.³³ Among the original proprietors of Groton are found such names as Longley, Davis, Tarbell, Green, Hall, and Prescott. The proprietors petitioned the General Court of Massachusetts for a new grant. The court granted them an area of land in the Berkshires, but this area was involved in a boundary dispute with New York. One half of this grant was lost when the final line was

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

³² Lincoln, *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

³³ Butler, *Op. cit.*, p. 60.

established. Consequently James Prescott, brother of Colonel William Prescott who was in charge of the American troops at Bunker Hill, petitioned the General Court on behalf of the Groton proprietors and received a grant of seven thousand acres on the south side of what is now Solon. This land was eventually granted to Thomas Spaulding — hence the early name of Spauldingtown for the southern part of town. Spaulding came from that part of Groton which is now Pepperell.³⁴ Many of Solon's early settlers from this area were veterans of the Revolutionary War, and "supposed" to be friends of James Prescott, and had perhaps fought for Colonel William Prescott at Bunker Hill.

In 1792 the Massachusetts General Court granted to Palmer Gardner, forty-five hundred acres of land in Sagadahoc Territory, second range, first township north of the Kennebec Patent, and bounded on the south by the land granted to Thomas Spaulding.³⁵

The public lots, plus 4,500 acres in the Gardner Grant, 7,000 acres in the Spaulding Grant, 11,520 acres in the Barnard Grant made a total of 23,020 acres,³⁶ or within 20 acres of being one township six miles square. Benjamin Poor surveyed and lotted the northern part of town into eighty-acre lots in 1792; Daniel Stewart likewise in the same year surveyed and lotted the southern part into 160-acre lots. Both men ran their range lines west to east, each range being one half mile wide.³⁷

³⁴ Butler, *Ibid.*, pp. 60-62.

³⁵ Lincoln, *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

³⁶ This 20 acre difference is probably due to a mistake on the part of either officials in General Court of Mass. or the surveyors.

³⁷ Lincoln, *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

Early Settlers

Probably the first white settler in the town of Solon was William Hilton. This cannot be substantiated by any accurate records, but it is almost certain that Mr. Hilton was the first permanent settler. Hilton arrived from Wiscasset in 1782. He was a Revolutionary War veteran, but the first year in which Revolutionary War soldiers were granted land was in 1801.³⁸ So, it is probable that Hilton exercised squatters rights, and later (1801) this land was granted to him.

Hilton left his wife with his brother in Anson while he built a log cabin, and cleared the land for next season's crops. He then returned to Anson for the winter, coming back to Solon by boat in 1783 with his wife and young son, David. The farm built by William Hilton remained the property of the Hilton family until 1952. In that year the farm was sold to Lee Rogers, but a section of the farm was reserved by Ralph Hilton in order to keep a part of the original acreage in the Hilton family. The old burial ground south of the house still exists and is well-cared for. When the township was laid out this lot became lot number thirteen.³⁹ This lot lies in the area along the River Road to Madison.

In the Spring of 1783 another Revolutionary War veteran came to the area and took up the lot adjoining Hilton's. This was William Hunnewell, who had been a neighbor of Hilton's in Wiscasset. This place is now owned by Philip Ward. The buildings on this lot were burned to the ground in 1960. According to tradition,

³⁸ Information from family records in which Ephraim Davis from Acton, Mass. was granted a tract of land in Solon, Maine by the government in honor of Captain Isaac Davis, the father of Ephraim.

³⁹ Lincoln, Mary P., *Op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

Phoebe Hunnewell, the daughter of William Hunnewell, was the first white child born in the town. However, there is no official record of this birth to be found.

Jonathan Bosworth is the next recorded settler of Solon. He, also, was a Revolutionary War veteran, and settled the area on the hill a half mile above Carratunk Falls on the road to Bingham.⁴⁰

Eleazer Whipple, who was in Colonel Prescott's regiment that fought at Bunker Hill, came from Pepperell in the 1790's and was given two-hundred acres of land.⁴¹ His son, Eleazer, Jr., was a man of great strength and size. He was six feet, seven inches tall and weighed two-hundred and twenty-seven pounds. The following story is told of him:

"A noted pugalist, of Augusta, hearing of Whipple's great strength (traveled) up the river through the forest from Augusta to wrestle with him. He found Whipple at Carratunk Falls fishing for salmon. He made known his errand, but Whipple, being a clever and pious man, refused to wrestle. The pugalist, however, had not traveled all that way for nothing, so he kept teasing and annoying Whipple until the Solon man could stand it no longer. He jumped up, grabbed the stranger by the seat of the pants and the nape of the neck, and shook him until he cried, 'Enough'. The pugalist retraced his steps to Augusta, a sadder, but wiser man.⁴²

The Eleazer Whipples settled on the farm now owned by Herbert Hanson, located about two miles east of Solon village on the Brighton Road.

⁴⁰ Lincoln, *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴¹ Lincoln, Mary P., *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁴² Davis, Harrison L., *Manuscript History of Solon*, p.

Another family with an interesting background was that of Moses Chamberlain, who came to Solon in the late 1780's. It is believed by many that his grandfather, John Chamberlain, killed Paugus, the Pequawket Chief, during Lovewell's War in 1725.⁴³

Another early settler was Ephraim Davis; the son of Captain Isaac Davis, whose monument stands in Acton, Massachusetts, in memory of his heroic death at Concord Bridge in 1775. He was the first patriot to fall at the battle of Concord Bridge.⁴⁴ Ephraim Davis came to Solon from Acton, Massachusetts, and settled in the southern part of town on lot number thirty-nine. This land is still owned by Davises.

Asa Buswell came from Salisbury, Massachusetts to Solon and settled on the hill just across from Fall Brook in the village. This house is now owned by Louis Shaw. The ell of this house is considered to be over one hundred and fifty years old. Asa Buswell was the owner of the first grist mill in the vicinity of Solon.⁴⁵

William Fletcher, who lived in Solon from 1790-99, was the first in Norridgewock in 1773, and his daughter, Sarah was the first white child born in the county.⁴⁶

Still other prominent early settlers were the Frenches from Salisbury, Massachusetts,⁴⁷ who came to Solon in 1800; Benjamin Merrill from Salisbury, Massa-

⁴³ Butler, Caleb, *Op. cit.*, p. 104.

⁴⁴ The author feels quite proud of his heritage and name, which stems, after six generations, directly from this Revolutionary War hero.

⁴⁵ Lincoln, Mary P., *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Lincoln, Mary P., *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁴⁷ More information on the French family will be found on p. 45.

chusetts, whose father was Captain Stephen Merrill of Revolutionary War fame; Corporal Enoch Jackman, who fought at Lexington in Captain Stephen Merrill's company, came from Salisbury with his wife. Captain Mathew Sanborn, who was at Valley Forge during the winter of 1776-77, settled on Fall Brook east of the village. He, also, was from Salisbury, Massachusetts.⁴⁸

From 1830 to 1850 more immigrants came to the United States from Ireland than any other country. The reasons for this exodus from Ireland were the potato failures of 1845, followed by a great famine, and the persecution under British rule. Most of these Irish immigrants landed at Quebec. Gradually they worked their way down into Maine, and then some came to Solon.

In the Census of 1830 there is no record of an Irish name in Solon, but in the census of 1870 one finds such names as McIntire, Kavanugh, McQuilkin, McKinney, McLaughlin, McClintick, McFadden, McCollor, McCarty, McDonald, Sheridan, Brannin, Cuddy, and Kelly. It is possible that some of these families were Scottish, but in all likelihood many were of Irish descent. Every Irish family that settled in Solon, according to the 1870 census report, was engaged in farming of some type.⁴⁹ Nine of the fourteen families mentioned above had at least one member of the family that was born in Ireland. Many of their children were born in Canada, which proves that many of the Irish families landed at Quebec.

In the early 1900's a few Scandinavian families settled in South Solon. No real reason is given for this

⁴⁸ Lincoln, Mary P., *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴⁹ U. S. Census Report of 1870 (on microfilm in U. of Me. Library.)

immigration but the names of Stred, Holmberg, and Kristoffersen appear in the census of 1900.⁵⁰ These people were farmers in Sweden so therefore, probably settled in South Solon because it was farmland similar to their home land.

The next immigration to Solon of any consequence was that of a few French Canadian families in the 1930's and 40's. Lumbering developments and interests attracted such families as the Berubes, Dubes, Giroux and Morins.

The latest sizable out-of-town addition to the population of Solon has come from the village of Flagstaff, which was flooded by the building of a dam on the Dead River. This immigration included the Burbanks and five Rogers families.

⁵⁰ U. S. Census Report of 1900. (In U. of Me. Library.)

Incorporation and Town Government

By 1803 the township was dotted with many small farms, and as population grew so did the problems, responsibilities, and needs. As early as 1803 the settlers in township 2-1 (Second tier of townships north of the Kennebec Patent and first range south of the Bingham Purchase) petitioned the commonwealth of Massachusetts for incorporation as the town of Sumner. Why this petition was not granted is not clear; possibly because there already was a town of Sumner incorporated in 1798. At this time the southern part of the town was referred to as Spauldingtown, and the part that is now the village was known as the Cape.⁵¹

Finally, in 1809, the General Court of Massachusetts passed "an act to incorporate the plantation numbered one in the second range of townships on the east side of the Kennebec River, north of the Plymouth Claim, in the county of Kennebec, into a town by the name of Solon".⁵²

The name selected was one of the seven sages of Greece. "Some lovers of ancient Greece and its law-givers must have lived in this little town in Maine."⁵³

The foundation of Solon's government is, as is the case of most small New England towns, the town meeting. It is here that money is raised and appropriated for all town expenditures: schools, highways and bridges, snow removal, fire department, and many other smaller appropriations. Throughout the nine-

⁵¹ Lincoln, Mary P., *Op. cit.*, pp. 12-13.

⁵² *The Public and General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, From February 28, 1807 to February 16, 1816*, Vol. IV, Wells and Lilly, Boston, 1816.

⁵³ Chadbourne, Ava H., *Maine Place Names and the Peopling of its Towns*, The Bond Wheelwright Co., Freeport, Maine, 1957.

teenth century and into the twentieth century town meeting day was one of the days circled on everyone's calendar as a day not to forget. Today, it seems, the town meeting has lost some of its appeal. No longer does it serve as one of the important social gatherings of the year; with modern communications people are in regular contact with their fellow townsmen. Present town meetings carry on nearly the same business as its predecessors, but spend more money with less interest.

On March 9, 1809, the first warrant for the first town meeting was sent to Jonas Heald. The warrant was sent from Richard Sawtelle, Justice of the peace in Norridgewock. The warrant required Jonas Heald to let the citizens know of the meeting to be held March 27, 1809.⁵⁴

At the time of incorporation the population of Solon was three hundred and seven. The first town meeting was held in Caleb Hobart's workshop in the southern part of town. The officers elected at the meeting were: a moderator, town clerk, board of three selectmen, town treasurer, constable, tax collector, a board of three as fish committee, a board of five as surveyors of highways, a board of four as fence viewers (men appointed to inspect fences of town), a man to value leather, a board of two as tything men (men to keep order in Church sermons and meetings), a board of two as poundkeepers (men to operate the town pound for stray cats and dogs), a board of four as field drivers (men to drive the cattle sold out of town), and a board of five as a school committee. The total amount of money raised at the first town meeting was one thousand dollars. One hundred and fifty dollars was raised for support of schools, one hundred and

⁵⁴ *Solon-Bingham Register*, p. 17.

fifty dollars to defray town charges for the ensuing year, and seven hundred dollars for the purpose of "making" and repairing roads. It, also, was voted to divide the town into four school districts.

In the town meeting it was voted to pay a man twelve cents per hour, a yoke of oxen eight cents per hour, use of ploughs six cents per hour, for labor done on highways.⁵⁵

In the town meeting of 1810 it was voted to pay Daniel Williams seven and a half per cent for collecting taxes for the ensuing year. This seems like a large figure in comparison to the present one and a half per cent being received by the present tax collector. At this same meeting it was voted to raise eighty dollars for town charges to be paid in corn and grain.⁵⁶

In 1816 the town of Solon voted twenty-seven to fourteen in favor of separation from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.⁵⁷ There is no record of the votes on the separation issue for the years 1817 to 1820.

By 1819 there was enough interest in transportation for the town to pass an article in the town meeting calling for three hundred dollars to be raised for the purchase of a snow roller.⁵⁸

An article of 1821 seems rather strange to us of the twentieth century. — It was voted to give James Jackman one cow for taking care of Sally White until she became twenty-one years of age. This same year it

⁵⁵ Town Records of the year 1809.

⁵⁶ Town Records of the year 1810.

⁵⁷ Town Records of the year 1816.

⁵⁸ Town Records of the year 1819.

was, also, voted that cattle shall not "go at large" in the highways or on the commons from December to the last day of March.⁵⁹

There were twenty-four different highway districts in the town by 1862, with a surveyor of highways to supervise each district. Apparently each of these men was paid twelve and one half cents per hour for the services that he performed. The town, that same year, had eight school districts throughout the township.⁶⁰

During the Civil War, in 1865, the town voted to pay any man 500 dollars who would volunteer for the Union Army.⁶¹ This might help explain the large number of soldiers in the Civil War from Solon.

In 1889 the town voted to exempt from taxation for a term of ten years any mill erected on the east bank of the Kennebec River at Carratunk Falls. A precedent that might well be followed at the present to attract industry to the town.

By the turn of the century Solon was raising \$9,-361.84 for all town expenditures. Included within this was \$3,300 for highways, bridges, and maintenance of roads.⁶² This compares with a total appropriation of \$68,008.55 for the year 1960, and a highway appropriation of \$18,066.⁶³ The school appropriation of 1901 amounted to \$1,925⁶⁴ as compared with \$30,316.47 in 1960.⁶⁵ This is an increase of

⁵⁹ Town Records of the year 1821.

⁶⁰ Town Records of the year 1862.

⁶¹ Town Records of the year 1865.

⁶² *Town Report of 1901*, p. 3.

⁶³ *Town Report of 1960*, p. 5.

⁶⁴ *Town Report of 1901*, p. 3.

⁶⁵ *Town Report of 1960*, p. 5.

fifteen-fold for the school expenditure and a twenty-fold increase in the highway expenditure. These increases seem astounding, but we must remember that these changes have taken place over a period of sixty years. Thus, the wages, prices, taxes, appropriations, and expenditures have increased in proportion to one another, not causing any great burden upon the citizens of Solon.

In 1901 the town voted to pay fifteen cents per hour for men, oxen, or horses for work on the roads. The figure included any road machines used by these men. At the same meeting the selectmen appointed citizens to such offices as Field Drivers, Surveyors of wood, bark, and lumber, Sealer of weights and measurers, poundkeepers, and Fence Viewers, in addition to the election of the usual town officers.⁶⁶

The next year, 1902, the town voted to pay two dollars per day to the Road Commissioner for his services. This same year the town raised one thousand dollars for the support of the poor. This figure, as compared with the twenty-five hundred raised in 1961, shows that there must have been a good deal of concern for the poor at the turn of the century.⁶⁷ Of course, social welfare in 1900 was really a responsibility of the town.

By 1917 the office of Field Drivers was discontinued. The last three men to serve in this capacity were Fred Viltum, Turner Davis, and Fred Drury. The next year saw the first local board of health established in the town. On this committee were Dr. Silden Green, Dr. John Piper, and Leslie McIntire.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Town Records of the year 1901.

⁶⁷ Town Records of the year 1902.

⁶⁸ Town Records of the years 1917 and 1918.

In 1923 the first firewarden was appointed in the town. This same year the offices of Fence Viewers and Poundkeepers were discontinued. By 1926 the town voted to pay the town treasurer fifty dollars per year, and to pay the School Committee at the same rate as other town officers for the time spent in such services. An interesting entry in the records of 1929 is the vote by the townspeople to discontinue repair of public watering tubs.⁶⁹

The town records of the years from 1930 to the present are filled with entries of increased appropriations for more numerous public facilities, highway improvements, school expenditures, and the various state taxes.

⁶⁹ Town Records of the years 1923, 1926, and 1929.

CHURCH HISTORY

The Methodists

In 1793 Jesse Lee had been sent to Maine by the New England Conference of the M. E. Church to organize a Methodist Church.⁷⁰ Jesse Stoneman became a co-worker with Jesse Lee, and as early as 1797 traveled into the upper Kennebec area which included Solon and the adjacent towns later known as the Kennebec circuit of the M. E. Church.⁷¹

By the year 1805 Solon became attached to what was known as the Norridgewock Circuit, with the Reverend Daniel Ricker as the first appointed circuit rider. This arrangement continued for twenty-five years until 1830, when the Circuit was divided and Solon became the central town of a circuit including the towns of Anson, North Anson, Bingham, and Athens. For many years the Solon Quarterly Conference was held jointly or alternately with the several outside towns. The Reverend E. Hotchkiss was the first preacher in charge. As the years brought with them greater population and prosperity, the outlying towns, such as Anson, North Anson, and Bingham became independent circuits or joined with other groups for their Quarterly Conferences. From 1845 to 1860 Solon was classified with either Bingham or Madison with alternating Quarterly Conferences. Since 1880, for the most part, Solon has held the Quarterly Conference at Solon.⁷² A Quarterly Conference would be any meeting of a Cir-

⁷⁰ The Solon M. E. Church Memorial Fund Committee, "The Methodist Church," (unpublished work by a Methodist Comm. in 1955), p. 8.

⁷¹ Lionel Lombard (Ed.) Solon M. E. Church Annual (Skowhegan: The Skowhegan Press, 1926), p. 6.

⁷² Lombard, *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

cuit of churches with the district superintendent presiding.

On July 27, 1844, at a Quarterly Conference held in Solon it was voted to have a preacher for the next year and to support him.⁷³

There is little recorded information on early church organization. Barns, farmhouses, and school houses were used for meeting places up to 1837 when the Union Meeting House was built. Church records show that Quarterly meetings were held in Solon Village, East Solon, Solon Union Meeting House, South Solon Free Meeting House.⁷⁴ Solon Methodist Church, and Eaton School House in Solon. In 1867 the Solon Circuit included the towns of Solon, Bingham, Moscow, some families in Madison, Concord, and Athens. Extensive revivals occurred under "the faithful labors" of the preachers, especially in 1834 under Oren Bent, in 1840 under John Allen, in 1842 under James Farrington, and in 1864 under Daniel Waterhouse.⁷⁵

These camp meetings were religious gatherings held in temporary encampments, and usually continued for a week or more.⁷⁶

In the records of the Methodist Church there are numerous references made to such camp meetings. In 1838 it was voted to hold a Camp Meeting on Eaton Hill in Solon. In 1846 reference was made to a Camp Meeting to be held in Solon if a suitable place could be found. These camps provided food, care for the sick

⁷³ M. E. Church Committee, *loc. cit.*

⁷⁴ More detail on another page on the Meeting House.

⁷⁵ M. E. Church Committee, *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

and injured, as well as serving as a religious instrument for conversion and the preaching of the Gospel.⁷⁷

During this same period, 1830 to 1860, the topics of slavery and temperance were being discussed, debated, and preached about. There was not special mention of slavery in the records of any denomination in town, other than the usual mild denunciations of it as sinful.⁷⁸

On temperance the Solon Methodist Church, in 1831, voted to memorialize the next General Conference on the subject of temperance. A chapter was inserted in the Methodist Church Discipline which declared that drunkenness was immoral. By 1859 this same disciplinary group declared that the habits of tobacco-chewing, smoking, and snuff-taking were unchristian.⁷⁹

During the nineteenth century the church was loyally supported by many staunch-hearted men, the most prominent being the Reverend Josiah and the Reverend Moses French.

The Reverend Moses French, born in Salisbury, Massachusetts, May 10, 1777, was at the age of eighteen under apprenticeship to learn the trade of joiner (a finish carpenter in modern terms). He returned to his home at the end of his apprenticeship and became converted to a very strong belief in God. He began at once to tell others what God had done for him. He sought Christian Society and took every opportunity to hold meetings as an Exhorter. He came to Solon in 1803 and with his brother, Josiah French, who came three

⁷⁷ The Methodist Church Records for the years 1838 and 1846.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, for the years 1831-1859.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

years earlier, settled on what is now known as French Hill just east of the present village. They both became licensed preachers and the Reverend Moses became a Circuit Rider of some note. The Reverend Moses, whose gainful employment was carpentering and farming, continued through life to hold meetings on the Sabbath in this vicinity. It was said of him that he attended more funerals and made more coffins than any other man in the country. He died July 19, 1845.⁸⁰

The Reverend Moses French had three sons; Luther, Moses Jr., and Joseph French, all of whom became members of the Maine Army in 1862. Luther was appointed Chaplain of the 20th Maine regiment and returned to the Conference in 1862. He was a delegate to the General Conference in Indianapolis in 1865 and in Chicago in 1868. His conference appointments were in numerous towns throughout the state, until his retirement in 1887.⁸¹

Joseph French was appointed Captain in the Union Army and was known as the "Minister Captain". He was killed in the Battle of Baton Rouge while crossing the Mississippi on August 19, 1862.⁸²

Moses French Jr. was born on February 3, 1821, married Miss Sarah Kidder from Norridgewock in September of 1845, and brought her to live at his father's home on French Hill. To them were born seven children, six before he enlisted in Company K of the Second Maine Cavalry. He was appointed Captain and served in the Gulf Campaign. During his absence from home his house burned, but was rebuilt by friends.

⁸⁰ M. E. Church Committee, *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸² *Ibid.*

This house is now the very beautiful home of John Waugh. Captain Moses French Jr. was a Class leader, Trustee, Steward, Sunday School Superintendent and teacher, Deacon, and to the end a staunch supporter of the Methodist Church. He was state senator in 1871, member of the Keystone Lodge, and representative of his church at the General Conference in Baltimore in 1876. On June 22, 1906, at the age of 85, Captain French passed away.⁸³

A brief history of the French family has been given because for a century they held responsible positions in the Methodist Church; they were devout Christians, faithful in attendance and generous in their support of the church. It, however, was not only the Frenches who made Methodism in Solon, but also the Bakers, Blackwells, Batchelders, Browns, Burnes, Cateses, Dearborns, Drurys, Eatons, Halls, Jewetts, Kidders, Longleys, Matsons, Morrills, Pauls, Pierces, Rowells, Rices, Spauldings, Starbirds, Smiths, Whipples, Wilsons, and others.⁸⁴ Not only are these names prominent in the Methodist Church annals, but in all phases of the town history.

By 1855 there were one hundred and forty-one members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The Methodists wanted more time than was available to them in the Union Meeting House, which they shared with the Congregationalists. In 1835 they hired the Town Hall for one Sunday in each month in addition to their quarter-time in the Union Church. In 1859 they built the Methodist Church that now stands on the corner of Pleasant and School streets. The two-story building with a first-floor vestry provided a

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

separate room for the Sunday School and its library, for mid-week prayers, class meetings, and for gatherings of a social nature. A carpenter who inspected the building before it was renovated in 1950 said, "It is built for all time". The Reverend Swanton Banks became the first preacher at a salary of \$365 a year. The building was dedicated in 1860, renovated in 1892 and in 1950, then rededicated in 1952.⁸⁵

The Congregationalists

The first Congregational Church society in Solon was organized on September 30, 1806, at Caratunk Falls. This society was made up of the following five members: Eleazer Whipple, Thomas Merrill, Calvin Pierce, Deborah Pierce, and Elizabeth Rowe. It was organized by Reverend Sewall and Mr. Williston, a missionary, and was known as "The Solon Congregational Church of Christ". In 1820 it was merged into a church located at South Solon, or Spauldingtown as it was then known, and was called "The South Solon Congregational Church".⁸⁶

During the first few years it was served by missionaries, among whom was Reverend Josiah Poet of Norridgewock and the Reverend Sewall, who was the most frequent preacher. By 1824 Reverend George Fargo became the resident pastor. Because of the weak state of the church, in 1811 it was agreed to form a union with Bingham Church and to meet together in communion and discipline, but each church was to retain its own covenant and articles of faith. That union was dissolved in 1819.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸⁶ Congregational Church Records for years 1806 and 1820.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, years 1806-1824.

For many years the services were held at different homes or in school houses. As early as 1835 it was voted to build a house of worship as soon as possible. Finally, in 1837 the Solon Union Meeting House, the present Congregational Church, was erected. On October 28, 1837, Elisha Coolidge deeded to the proprietors the land for the church, including part of the burial ground. This building was originally owned jointly by four denominations. There are in existence today some of the old deeds to the pews dating back to 1837.⁸⁸

Acting on a petition drawn up by Silas Maynard and Timothy Spaulding, an Ecclesiastical Council composed of pastors and delegates from Bingham, Norridgewock, South Solon, Anson, and also Reverend Loring Fargo convened at the home of Silas Maynard in Solon Village and founded the present Congregational Church in Solon. The membership was composed of Timothy Spaulding, Silas Maynard, Nancy Spaulding, Lucy Maynard, Sally Varnum, Bathsheba and Dorcas Bosworth. Reverend Cyrus Stone, Pastor of the Bingham Church became first acting pastor and preached in Solon one-fourth of the time.⁸⁹

The Union Meeting House, as it was called at the time, was built in 1837, with the Methodists owning one-fourth and holding services one-fourth of the time.⁹⁰ One of the interesting facts about this church building is that at first it was owned by the Baptists,

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, years 1835-1837.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1837.

⁹⁰ The Baptists and Universalists owned the other two-quarters of the church, but no records can be found to ascertain when they sold their shares to the Methodists and Congregationalists.

Congregationalists, Methodists, and Universalists in equal shares.

This building also has the oldest pipe organ in Maine. It was the first pipe organ ever brought into Maine and was originally installed in the Chestnut Street Methodist Church at Portland. In August 1859 it was bought by the Union Church people of Solon for \$250. Freight and other expenses brought the total cost to \$307.50.⁹¹ The organ has been used most of the time all these years, and in the 1920's was renovated and repaired and is in use at the present time.

In 1856, in order to paint and repair the church, the pew-holders were taxed \$150 each to pay the bills. There were fifty-three pew-holders and anyone not paying his share within six months lost his pew, which was to be sold at public auction.⁹² Apparently, everyone paid his dues as there is no mention of a public auction. They were the old-fashioned pews with doors that locked on the inside.

When the news of the victory of the Battle of Gettysburg was received in Solon both the bells of the Congregational and Methodist Churches were rung. In trying to outdo each other, evidently the Congregational church's bell became cracked and gave out with a muted tone. They continued to use the bell, a Paul Revere type, until 1890 when it was recast and could once more ring out as of old. In the early 1890's the church was remodeled, at which time the old pews were removed, and new ones installed.⁹³

On February 4, 1899, it was voted to remove the

⁹¹ Congregational Church Records for 1859.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 1856.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 1863.

horsesheds which stood near the church, after getting permission from a majority of pewholders. Each holder was sent a letter asking his permission either to repair or tear them down. One gentleman replied,

I don't know as I care what you do with the sheds, but my advice is by all means repair them. No one can go to meeting and hitch his horse out in the cold and wind. Right them up, shingle them, and put doors to each stall and paint the whole thing. That is the way to do it.⁹⁴

Evidently his advice was not followed for the sheds were torn down.

It was voted on March 26, 1904, to buy the house and lot across the street from the church, owned by Abner Whipple, for a parsonage at the price of \$1,400. Before the building was completely paid for a fire burned it to the ground. With the insurance money of \$1,000 and donations, the building was rebuilt. The property was eventually paid for in full.⁹⁵ This building was sold to a private owner in 1955. The money from this sale has been used for remodeling the church.

Two ladies groups which worked hand in hand with church activities were the Ladies Home Circle (Congregational) and the Ladies Aid (Methodist). The Ladies Home Circle was founded in the 1870's and the Ladies Aid in 1884. These two groups became one when the Congregational and Methodist churches became federated in 1933.⁹⁶ This ladies organization became known as the ladies Auxiliary. This group, as

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1899.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1904.

⁹⁶ The two Church groups decided to become federated because they felt that the expense of supporting two ministers and maintaining two parsonages was beyond the financial capabilities of such a small town. The church is now known as the Federated Church of Solon.



9454 - Winter Scene, Solon, Me,

Winter scene of Solon Village looking down the hill toward Fall Brook (1915)



View of village with new Caratunk Inn (now Solon Hotel) on the right
(early 1900's)



Three team road scraper driven by Isaac Davis (Author's Father) on North Main Street (1920's)



Picture of the "Husking Crew" at the Solon Corn Shop (early 1900's)

North Somerset Grange
Hall, Solon, Maine.



View of North Somerset Grange building constructed in 1909. Located on School Street. (Picture taken in 1950's)



The only brick house in the town. Built in 19th century. Owned by Asher Davis (Author's Grandfather) until 1950's.



View of Caratunk Falls on the Kennebec River. It was here that Benedict Arnold's expedition was forced to portage in 1775. (late 1800's)



View of pulp mill and the Central Maine Railroad bridge at Caratunk Falls (early 1900's)



Solon-Embden ferry boat operated by Allen Rice. Embden Fair was always a day of "congested traffic". (turn of the century)



The first bridge across the Kennebec to Embden. Built in the same general area that the ferry boat operated. (1910)



The section crew at Solon Station (early 1900's)



The Methodist Church which was built in 1859. Located at the corner of Pleasant and School streets. (1920 view)



Elm Hill Farm located on land two miles north of the village and overlooking the Kennebec River. Formerly owned by Tilden Davis (Author's Uncle) for many years. (Built in 19th Century)



View of Solon Station in the "heyday" of the railroad. Arra Davis (Author's Mother) is standing on the platform (1920's)



The Congregational Church which was built in 1837. Located on North Main Street (1920 view)

High School Building,
Solon, Maine.



The first High School built in town. It was located on a site just south of the present location of the Grange Hall. It was destroyed by fire in 1911. (Built in 1899)



The present school building was constructed in 1913. It eventually would serve all grades -- first through twelfth. (Picture taken in 1950's)



Maple Grove Rural School which was built in the early 1800's. Located in eastern part of town. (Picture taken in 1940's)

the two groups from whence it sprang, continues to raise money by various means to help defray the expenses of the church. In 1931, before the two ladies groups were merged, Luther Hunnewell left \$5,000 to be known as the Luther Hunnewell Fund to the Ladies Aid Society (Methodist). This money was to be invested in safe securities and the income used annually as follows:

To pay fifty dollars to the Methodist Church of Solon, Maine, and to use the balance of said income annually in the discretion of said Society to further the education of worthy, poor children.⁹⁷

This fund is under the direction of a committee from the Methodist Church group. This is the only endeavor that is singularly retained by either of the two church organizations.

The South Solon Congregational Church

From 1820 to 1841 the South Solon Church group held their meetings in the homes of its deacons or in the schoolhouse. Reverend Fifield Holt and Reverend Josiah Peet served the group until a full-time pastor could be obtained. Mr. Peet came from Norridgewock "in blizzard, sun or mud" to preach, baptize the children, and advise on church discipline. In 1824 George Fargo became the fulltime pastor. He became known as Elder Fargo, and served the small community until 1843.⁹⁸

In 1841 a corporation was formed to put up a bond for the building of a meeting house. The bond was put

⁹⁷ M. E. Church Committee, *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁹⁸ Mildred H. Cummings, *The Story of a Meeting House*, (Published by the South Solon Historical Society, 1959) p. 11.

up through the purchase of shares on the corporation. One church pew was to be considered a share. Many subscribers bought more than one pew as there were more pews than subscribers. The foundation was laid and the beams were raised by men of the congregation. A joiner who contracted to complete the building was a man by the name of John Dore who came from Concord, on the west bank of the Kennebec River. Mr. Dore did his job for \$475, making the total cost of the building \$1,200. The work was completed before Christmas, and on the fourth of January, 1843, the congregation assembled to dedicate the new Meeting House.⁹⁹

From 1842, until the end of the nineteenth century, there was little change in the character of the Meeting House or in its congregation. Church services continued with few interruptions until 1904. After 1904, church services in the Meeting House were abandoned. The people began to move away to the industrial towns, the draft for World War I further depleted the population, and the new highways of the 1920's were far away from the South Solon area, therefore, making it difficult to send their produce to market.¹⁰⁰

In 1939 the Meeting House was repaired and services once again held for the summer of that year. Mr. Willard Cummings, a Maine woolen manufacturer, and his wife Mrs. Helen Cummings settled on a farm in South Solon. Through the interest of Mrs. Cummings the idea of restoring the church became a reality. Services were held in the Meeting House each summer until the outbreak of World War II.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-31.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 35-37.

A bold turn in the history of the Meeting House evolved in 1950. In a project of five years duration, the interior walls were decorated with fresco paintings. "This painting technique is one in which color is applied to a lime plaster surface while it is wet".¹⁰² Students from the Skowhegan School of Art worked five summers on the project and services held during the summer months since 1950. These efforts have made the "little white church at the crossroads" known throughout the state.

At the present time summer services are held at the South Solon Church. These services are not weekly, but are held about once a month. Attendance is small due to the small population of the area, and the fact that there is no regular pastor. Those attending include the residents of South Solon, a few people from surrounding towns, and summer visitors in the area from other states in the Union.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNICATIONS

In 1782, when William Hilton located in Solon, the town had nothing but Indian foot trails good only for travel by foot or horseback. As more settlers came to the area it became necessary for better transportation. The Indian trails became widened so ox carts could travel from house to house, or from the homestead to the sawmill. Ditches were sometimes plowed on each side of the road to permit drainage.

Oxen were used for most work around the homes of the early settlers; such work as plowing, hauling logs to the sawmill to be sawed into lumber, and even for the Sunday afternoon ride to the neighbors. The average speed of a pair of oxen was around two and a half miles per hour. This was even too slow for those times. So, slowly, the horse began to replace the ox. The horses' average was a "speedy" five miles per hour. There were two vehicles with which these horses were used: a light wagon known as a buggy, and another known as a buckboard. The buggy was used for riding, and the buckboard for transporting light loads as well as for riding.

Until 1809, the year of incorporation, the only roads in Solon were country roads. The first town road to be built was the River Road that started near the Madison town line running eastward by Joseph Matson's place, by Jonas Spaulding's home, until it reached Jewett's Corner in South Solon. Another road built in 1809 was the road beginning near the Buswill house, on the hill just north of the center of town, to the Michael Stream bridge at the foot of Sand Hill about one mile south of town.¹⁰³

¹⁰³ Davis, *Op. cit.*, p. 15.

By the 1880's, after a hundred years of settlement, the town's population had expanded to nearly a thousand, calling for more and better roads. In 1887 the town purchased its first road machine.¹⁰⁴ This machine, of course, was drawn by horse.

The Stage and the Railroad

From the early 1800's to the beginning of the twentieth century there were stage coaches through Solon. In 1889 there were three different stage routes entering and leaving Solon. One was the stage (two-a-day) from North Anson coming up the Kennebec River from Norridgewock, Madison and Anson. In 1888 the stage fare from North Anson to Solon was fifty cents. Another stage was one coming from Waterville to Skowhegan and on into Solon from a southerly direction. It was in Solon that the travelers from the North Anson stage could make connections with the Skowhegan stage and travel northward to Bingham, The Forks, and on to Quebec. The traveling time from Solon to The Forks was slightly more than ten hours; an average of three miles an hour. Another stage ran from Solon to Athens, through Kingsbury, and on to Moosehead Lake in a northeasterly direction. In that same year, 1888, the stage fare from Boston to The Forks, Maine was fourteen dollars for a round trip ticket.¹⁰⁵ Many tourists going to Kineo, on Moosehead Lake, rode the stage through Solon in the summer months.

From this brief survey of the stage coach era, we could say that Solon was a minor nerve center for a

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Information from notes taken by Walter McDougall, Jr. from the book *Summer Vacations at Moosehead Lake* by Lucius Hubbard.

network of three stage routes extending to the northern and northeastern parts of Maine, and to Canadian destinations.

Beginning in 1889, when the Somerset Railroad came to Solon, the days of the stage coach were numbered. By 1888 the Somerset Railroad had extended as far north as North Anson from the towns of Madison and Anson following the age-old route up the Kennebec River. By the next year the terminus of the railroad was extended to Embden, across the river from Solon. At this time the town of Solon refused to buy stocks in the Somerset Railroad. Plans were already underway to extend the railroad northward to Bingham by 1890, therefore, the railroad crossed the Kennebec River at Caratunk Falls, one mile north of Solon village and continued on to Bingham.¹⁰⁶ This accounts for the location of Solon Station at Caratunk Falls, and explains why the station wasn't located in the village. Solon later bought stocks in the railroad. Located in the vicinity of the station, by the early 1900's was a corn canning plant, a pulp and paper mill, and a potato house. Thus, Solon became a regular stop along the Somerset Railroad line. The mail came on the train and was carried to the post office by a horse-drawn stage owned by Bert Gray, owner of the hotel at that time.¹⁰⁷

By the 1890's there were three daily passenger trains traveling the Somerset Railroad lines from Waterville to Kineo, with stops at Oakland, Norridgewock, Madi-

¹⁰⁶ From notes by Walter McDougall taken from *Down the West Branch* by Captain Farrar. (The Somerset Railroad was later taken over by Maine Central Railroad.)

¹⁰⁷ From a letter in possession of Walter McDougall written by Clarence Soper, son of William Soper, station agent at Solon from 1900-21. (Recollections of his childhood in Solon.)

son, Anson, North Anson, Embden, Solon, Bingham, and The Forks. During the summer months this service was increased to four passenger trains a day. This extra train in the summer was a Pullman for the tourists. It was possible to travel a Pullman all the way from New York or Boston to Kineo without changing trains. In addition to the line to Kineo from The Forks, there was also a line extending to Sandy Bay and on into St. Joseph, Quebec.¹⁰⁸ All this mileage of track was operated by the Somerset Railroad Company. In 1890 the passenger fare from Solon to Bingham, a distance of eight miles, was seventy-five cents; and the fare from Solon to The Forks, a thirty-mile trip, was two dollars and a half.¹⁰⁹

By the 1930's the passenger train service of the Somerset Railroad was becoming very unprofitable due to motorized vehicles and the advent of good highways, which made it easier and quicker to travel by automobile. It was in 1933 that the last passenger train was run from Bingham to Kineo. And later that year the passenger train service from Oakland to Bingham was discontinued.¹¹⁰ This brought to an end the era of the "iron horse", an era lasting well over forty years.

At the present, the freight train service terminates at Bingham. In 1962 the train ran only twice a week, carrying as its freight pulp, railway express parcels, supplies for the few mills in the area, and finished wood products manufactured in the area.

¹⁰⁸ Mcdougall, *Op. cit.*, *Down the West Branch*.

¹⁰⁹ From old schedules of Somerset Railroad in possession of Walter Mcdougall.

¹¹⁰ From notes on Somerset Railroad by Walter Mcdougall.

Ferry Boats and Other Forms of Transportation

In 1809 the Ferry Boat, located just below the present site of the Solon-Embden Bridge, was operated by a Mr. Bean. By 1830 the town owned this Ferry, but disposed of it the following year. Others to operate this Ferry were: Joshua Grant, Theophilus Hilton, Allen Rice, and Jothan Stevens. This Ferry remained in operation until 1910, when an iron bridge was constructed across the Kennebec.¹¹¹ This iron bridge was replaced by the modern concrete bridge of today, which was built in 1957.

The first iron bridge across Fall Brook, just north of the village, was built in 1891, and replaced by the present cement bridge in 1932.

The first automobile in town was purchased by William Soper in 1905, who was the station agent at that time. His purchase was a one-cylinder Cadillac.¹¹² Soon after this, gravel-surfaced roads were being built due to heavier loads of goods being hauled by the farmers and merchants of town.

Trucks were coming into use by the 1920's. Presently there are forty miles of roads in Solon which are plowed each winter. Twenty-five miles are gravel-surfaced, and fifteen miles are bituminous-surfaced.

In 1933 railway passenger service to Solon was discontinued, and this same year saw the first appearance of a regular bus route through town. The mail, which had previously been carried on the train, was delivered to town by the daily bus. This passenger bus service and mail delivery existed until 1949, when the bus

¹¹¹ Davis, *Op. cit.*, p. 17.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

service through town was discontinued. Since 1949 the mail has been delivered by United States Postal trucks.¹¹³

Post Office

The Post Office was established at Solon February 14, 1818. Isaac Rouse was the first postmaster and was succeeded on August 13 of that same year by Asa Buswell. The location of all the buildings that housed the post office before the fire of 1925 are not known. It is known that it was located at many different places in town. After 1925 the post office was moved to the building across from the hotel, where it remained until January of 1962. It is now located in a modern building at the corner of Perry and Main Streets.¹¹⁴

The South Solon Post Office was established in 1823, with Hezekiah Hall as the first postmaster. This office was discontinued on October 31, 1902.¹¹⁵ The South Solon mail has been sent to Solon Village ever since; then dispatched to South Solon by rural mail carriers.

The first rural mail route in town was established in 1903, with Dudley Healey as carrier at a salary of fifty dollars per month.¹¹⁶

A second mail route was established in 1912, being carried by Walter Cross. This second route was twenty-four miles in length, while the first, or original route was twenty-seven miles long. When Mr. Cross

¹¹³ Information from Aubrey Kelly present postmaster.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Davis, *Op. cit.*, p. 4 of supplement.

¹¹⁶ Kelley, *Op. cit.*

retired in 1933 the two routes were consolidated and Roland Tozier became the carrier serving both routes.¹¹⁷ Mr. Tozier, the present carrier, has served the town for thirty-six years.

Other Developments

By the turn of the century Solon was just beginning to receive the luxuries of life; items which today we accept as necessities. The first telephone was at the old hotel in 1890. Electric lights were installed in the village in 1909, the power being furnished by the Starbird Steam Mill Company. Since 1912 this power has been furnished by the Central Maine Power Company, with its hydro-electric plant at Caratunk Falls. Electric power was not extended to the east of the Village until the 1920's. In 1905 concrete sidewalks replaced the wooden planks used in the nineteenth century. And it was in 1925 that the first airplane landed on the property now owned by Everett Meader, just east of the village.¹¹⁸

Thus, Solon has evolved from the oxen and horse to the automobile and airplane; from the messenger and telegraph to the telephone and television. What next?

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Davis, *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

ECONOMIC HISTORY

Merchants

The first record of merchants in the history of Solon appears in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Elisha Coolidge from Hallowell, and a Mr. Rouse from Boston were joint proprietors of a general store for almost fifty years. Their place of business was a building located at the present site of the home now owned by George Donahue, locally known as the Pollard place. Another early merchant was Bartholomew Boies, who came from Skowhegan and kept a store and hotel on the property now owned by Hazen Hunnewell. Both of these early places of business were located just north of Fall Brook on the Solon-Bingham road. Silas Tibbetts and Chandler Knights came from Bingham and traded at the place on North Main Street now known as the Curtis place.¹¹⁹ All of these businesses were probably well established by 1830. There were many others which followed in the nineteenth century, but it seems unnecessary to mention them in this work.

The names of Rowell, Buswell, Grover, Gray, Merrill, Vittum, Smith, McInters, Jones, Miller, Andrews, Heald, and Cross recall but a few of the successful merchants before the present time.¹²⁰

At the present time there are but five merchants in the town of Solon. Albert Baxter operates the grocery store beside the old post office, Roger Heald operates the grocery store on the corner of Pleasant and Main Streets, Bernard Shepardson runs a grocery and hard-

¹¹⁹ *Solon-Bingham Register*, 1903, pp. 21-22.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

ware store in the village, Virginia Andrews operates a variety store and filling station on North Main Street.

In addition to these merchants there are two garage operators in town. Paul Russell operates the Esso station at the corner of Ferry and Main Streets, and Olen Brown operates "Brownie's" garage on South Main Street. The Solon Hotel, located in the center of town is operated by Raymond Faucher. The River View Rest Camps, located at the Solon-Embsen bridge, are operated by Fritz Spotholts and Fred Walters, Bell's Cabins are run by Walter Bell, and Mountain View Camps, located five miles south of town, are operated by William Partridge.

Manufacturing

The manufacturing history of the town of Solon began at an early date. To induce settlers to the northern part of town, the early owners of the territory found it was necessary to provide mills for the manufacture of lumber and the grinding of grain. As early as 1793 Calvin Pierce built the first lumber mill in town just above the present dam on Fall Brook. This mill had the old-fashioned up and down saw.¹²¹

The first grist mill on Fall Brook was built by Joseph Buswell. By the middle of the nineteenth century there were many little mills along the banks of Fall Brook to accommodate the needs of the area. Such industries as sawing lumber, grinding of grain, carding wool, cloth dressing, and carriage and harness making came into operation.¹²²

At one time there were two cloth and carding mills,

¹²¹ *Solon-Bingham Register*, p. 23.

¹²² Davis, *Op. cit.*, p. 4.

a grist mill, a tannery, two sawmills, and a shingle woodworking mill on six dams which spanned Fall Brook in its half mile drop to the Kennebec. Freshet, fire, and disuse have destroyed most of these structures, and not a wheel is turning on Fall Brook today.¹²³

Elizah Grover is credited with first developing the power at Caratunk Falls around the year 1837. He built a saw mill on the west side, a grist mill on the east side, and a bridge to span the falls in the same area. In 1846 the bridge and mills were almost completely destroyed by a freshet. This power remained practically idle until 1887, when Staunton Day and David Mills took possession of the plant and two years later began construction of a pulp mill. This mill was opened in 1891. Seven years later Day and Mills failed and in 1898 the property was conveyed to the Moosehead Company. The International Paper Company assumed ownership in 1899 and continued to operate under the same ownership until it was burned in 1920. The mill was rebuilt and operated until 1925, when it stopped operation and fell into disrepair never to be used again.¹²⁴

The Solon Creamery Company was one of the most important industries of the town. This company was organized in 1893, and erected near Caratunk Falls a building that same year. Its capital was \$10,000, largely in the hands of businessmen and farmers of Solon. The company operated creameries at Norridge-wock, Harmony, and Palermo.¹²⁵ The creamery continued in operation until October of 1931, when it was closed.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹²⁵ *Solon-Bingham Register*, p. 25.

Captain Moses French was the first to build a steam saw mill in town on Fall Brook. This mill was burned in 1905 and rebuilt in 1906 by Albert W. Starbird. His two sons, Harold and Elwin, operated this mill until 1955. Others have operated the mill in the 1950's, but at present there is no activity at the mill.

Today there are very few industries in operation in town. There is a new saw mill owned and operated by Leon French and Cleon Whipple on the River Road about a mile and a half south of the village. The Solon Manufacturing Company, located on Ferry Street, employs about eighty men and women in their mill in town and packaging plant in Skowhegan. They manufacture ice cream sticks, tongue depressors, cocktail sticks, coffee stirers, and paint paddles from birchwood bought from the surrounding lumbering operations.

Another industry of Solon is the Shorty Built Boat Company, operated since 1946 by George Saucier. This company builds boats and does custom repair work.

The Whiting Fence Company has operated near the Solon Depot since 1947. This company manufactures cedar fencing and other cedar products and employs only five or six men throughout the year.

Many industries have been in operation in Solon but only these very few remain. Many of the commodities that were produced locally for home consumption are now shipped or trucked to town from other areas of the country. Thus, specialization and rapid transportation take their toll on the small town.

PROFESSIONAL MEN

Physicians

The first physician to locate in Solon was Mortimer Bodwell, who practiced in town in the 1830's.¹²⁶ Other physicians before 1875 were Dr. Parsons, Dr. Stevens, Dr. Kingman, and Dr. Hunnewell. All of these above-mentioned men served only two to five years each, and then moved on to other towns. By 1860 Dr. Jonathan Moore began practicing in Solon and continued until 1900. In 1875 Solon had four physicians: J. B. Kingman, D. S. Hunnewell, W. B. Fellows, and J. S. Moore.¹²⁷

Dr. Seldon Greene opened his office in Solon in 1882 and continued to attend the sick until 1919, when he retired. Another long-term physician of Solon was Dr. C. A. Paul, who began his work in 1889 and continued until his death in 1911. According to the Solon-Bingham Register of 1903:

Solon is especially well supplied with medical talent of a high order, her physicians being Dr. Moore, Dr. S. F. Greene, Dr. C. A. Paul, and Dr. Bates, who has recently come to this place and gives promise of being a successful practitioner.¹²⁸

In 1911 Dr. John O. Piper opened an office at his home on North Main Street. He carried on a wide practice until 1924 when he moved to Waterville. Dr. J. C. Boyce came to Solon in 1924 and practiced until 1930. Dr. Franklin P. Ball, now of Bingham, had an office

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹²⁷ *Solon-Bingham Register*, p. 25.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

in Solon from 1929-30. Since that time Solon has been without the services of a resident physician except for a short period in 1950 when Dr. W. E. Jordan Jr., now of Skowhegan, had a practice here.

Dentists

Solon has had only one resident dentist. This was Rinaldo Pease, who carried on his profession from 1882 to 1889.¹²⁹ Many dentists from neighboring towns have extended their services to include Solon and have had part-time offices here, but at the present there is no dentist in town.

Lawyers

Elias Cobb, Silas Haynes, and Benjamin Williams were the first to establish law practices in Solon. They were followed by M. E. Brown, who was admitted to the bar in 1840 and practiced in Solon for fifteen years. E. C. Savage had a Solon office from 1848 to 1882. O. R. Bacheller was in practice in Solon from 1852 until 1877. Edwin Nash, Seth Willard, and Levi Greenleaf also were Solon lawyers previous to 1880.¹³⁰

In 1880 Turner Buswell opened his law office and carried on his legal business until 1919, a period of nearly forty years. Lawyers in Solon between 1880 and 1918 were George W. Gower, William B. Brown, and Thomas J. Young.

The last man to maintain a law practice in Solon was Clayton E. Eames. He practiced in Solon from 1918 to 1928, when he moved to Skowhegan. Mr. Eames served as Somerset County Attorney and is currently Western Somerset Municipal Judge.

¹²⁹ Town Records for the years 1882-1889.

¹³⁰ *Solon-Bingham Register*, p. 26.

EDUCATIONAL HISTORY

Only one year after incorporation, the citizens of Solon voted at the town meeting held in 1810 to divide the town into five school districts to be under the direction of a district school committee. This committee, composed of one representative from each district, was authorized to hire the school teachers and to apportion to each district its share of school money raised by the town. The members of this first committee were Jonas Heald, Ephraim Davis, Luther Pierce, William Hilton, and Benjamin Merrill.¹³¹

In the ensuing years more schools were added to the original five, making a total of fourteen district schools at various locations in Solon by the end of the nineteenth century. The fourteen district schools, each known by the number of its district were:

Number one: This is the schoolhouse that later became known as the Washington School and is the only remaining rural school still standing in town. It is located in the southern part of town at Rice's corner. In 1950 this building was given by the town to the people of South Solon for social gatherings. It is now known as the South Solon Community House.

Number two: This schoolhouse was located on land now owned by Roy Andrews in South Solon.

Number three: Located in South Solon, this little red schoolhouse was built southeast of the farm now owned by Philip Ward. It was known later as the Lincoln School.

Number four: This school was located near the foot

¹³¹ Town Records of 1810.

of Parkman Hill in the eastern part of town on land now owned by Ira Adams.

Number five: The Village School was located in the building on School Street now owned by Herbert Hanson.

Number six: The Maple Grove School was located at the intersection of the Rowell Pond Road.

Number seven: The Franklin School was located on the Athens Road opposite the intersection of the Rowell Pond Road.

Number eight: The first schoolhouse built in this district was located at Crotto Corner. Later the Baker School was built to replace the older school. This new building was located a mile and a half off the Brighton Road on land now owned by Oscar McQuilken.

Number nine: The school was located in South Solon south of the farm now owned by George Aubrey. The school was discontinued before 1900.

Number ten: The Longfellow School was built in South Solon to replace the old building in district two. Roy Andrews now owns the land that this school was built upon.

Number eleven: The Eaton School was located on Eaton Hill in the eastern part of town, on the road leading from Eaton Hill to Rowell Pond Road. When this road was discontinued in 1883, it was necessary to close the school and to build the new schoolhouse in district seven. (Mentioned before as the Franklin School).

Number twelve: The schoolhouse stood below Solon Village at the intersection of U. S. Route 201 and the River Road.

Number thirteen: This school was located at the intersection of U. S. Route 201 and the old Lake Road. This house was used as a home until it was destroyed by fire in 1948.

Number fourteen: This school was known as the Phinias Chase School and was located near Baker Pond on the road leading to the Later place, now owned by Elwyn Starbird.¹³²

By the year 1901 there were only eight rural school houses in use by the town. There was a total of two hundred and sixty-one students in the town, according to the Superintendent's Report.¹³³ By the turn of the century these areas were consolidating their schools and doing away with the district system due to legislation and impetus from the state government.¹³⁴

In 1898 the school committee urged the district schools to establish grades and a grade system, as had been done in the village school. That same year a three year course was offered in the high school.¹³⁵

By 1907 the matter of conveyance of pupils had become a financial problem as the cost was nearly equal to that of teachers' salaries. This was due to the closing of some of the rural schools for lack of enough pupils, which made it necessary to transport these children to the larger schools.¹³⁶

In the year 1917 the Solon common schools were in session thirty-two weeks of the year.¹³⁷

¹³² From a list of old schools composed by Laura E. Meader.

¹³³ Annual Town Report of 1900.

¹³⁴ Ava H. Chadbourne, *A History of Education in Maine*, p. 364.

¹³⁵ Annual Town Report of 1898.

¹³⁶ Annual Town Report of 1907.

¹³⁷ Annual Town Report of 1917.

By 1933 plans were being made for the consolidation of several of the remaining rural schools. To meet the state requirements for transporting the many students to the village school a new bus was purchased, the driver of which was the janitor, Fletcher Thompson.¹³⁸

The Washington School, the last of the town's rural schools was closed in 1947 and the pupils were transferred to the village school. This necessitated the purchase of a new school bus which was driven that year by Raymond Bean. In 1949 a large garage was built directly behind the schoolhouse to house the two school buses.

Secondary Education History

As early as 1862 Solon had a private high school of sixty-five pupils. From 1863 to 1889 a Free High School was held in the various districts for one term a year. Beginning in 1898, two terms of high school of ten weeks each were held in the Solon Village School House. The teacher, Mrs. Lillian French Pierce, received twelve dollars and fifty cents a week as her salary for teaching all courses. The total amount of money expended for education in the year 1899 amounted to \$1,398.75.¹³⁹

In the year 1899 the first high school was constructed at a cost of \$5,000,¹⁴⁰ just below the present site of the Grange Hall. The first diploma awarded from Solon High School was to Mahlon Whipple in 1903.

¹³⁸ Annual Town Report of 1933.

¹³⁹ Annual Town Report of 1899.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

The following year the first commencement exercises were held.

By 1908 Solon had joined with some of the surrounding towns to employ a superintendent of schools. George C. Hight of Athens received \$100 from Solon for his labors. Previous to this the Superintendent had been a local resident.¹⁴¹

In the same year an assistant principal was required in the high school by state law, and Mrs. Mildred Manson was employed as this assistant. Much credit is due Mrs. Manson, for she was not only a very successful teacher for years, but became superintendent of schools in 1904, and served until 1906.¹⁴²

On the night of October 29, 1911, the village schoolhouse burned to the ground. The rest of the school year was spent in the Town Hall, owned by the Masons, Odd Fellows, and Modern Woodmen Lodges. Each student supplied his own desk and chair.

In September of the following year the present school building had been completed by the builders, who were Daniel York and Ernest Paul both of town. The entire cost of the building amounted to \$17,500, for which the town went into debt. For the first time a full janitor was hired.¹⁴³

In 1917 the high school was in session for thirty-six weeks. All common school pupils residing over a mile and a half from school were conveyed at town expenses.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Annual Report of 1908.

¹⁴² Davis, *Op. cit.*, p. 9.

¹⁴³ Annual Town Report of 1912.

¹⁴⁴ Annual Town Report of 1917.

The period of the late 1930's and early 1940's witnessed many additions to the Solon High School curriculum. In 1935 music was introduced, 1938 saw the first commercial course in the high school, and in 1941 an industrial arts course was introduced, with Raymond Dean as instructor. Mr. Dean is still teaching this course. In 1946 a school lunch program was initiated, which has been very successfully operated to the present time.

In 1933 the sum of over \$25,000 was set aside by the will of Mrs. Minnie Jones, the interest of said sum to go to deserving members of the senior class, who desired to further their education. This sum was to be known as the Carroll C. Jones Scholarship Fund, as the money was left in memory of Mrs. Jones' son, Carroll C. Jones. Over the years this scholarship grant has helped many students obtain a college education. Although the scholarship only helps a student for the first year in college, it is that initial impetus of aid for one year that has helped students to see through the next three years on their own. This scholarship fund has expended a total of \$20,424.21.¹⁴⁵ on deserving students from Solon High School over the past twenty-seven years.

In 1958 the town raised \$1,575 to repair and renovate that portion of the town hall used by the school as a gymnasium and for other purposes.¹⁴⁶

Last September when school reopened there were one hundred eighty-five pupils enrolled in the Solon schools. Of these, one hundred and twenty were in the elementary grades and sixty-five in the high school. The

¹⁴⁵ Annual Town Reports, 1934-61.

¹⁴⁶ Annual Town Report of 1959.

current school committee members are Paul Russell, Tilden Davis, and Abbott Withers. The present Superintendent is Mr. Boothbay.

The present curriculum of Solon High School is taught by five teachers. The commercial subjects seem adequate, and the history courses meet all state requirements. The English and language (two years of French) departments are adequate. The science courses include General Science, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. Laboratory equipment is the greatest need in the science department. The mathematics section of the curriculum seems to lag behind all the other sections. Only Algebra I and II, and Plane Geometry are taught. Also, there are no facilities whatsoever for physical education, other than the varsity sports of basketball, baseball, and softball.

OTHER HISTORICAL ITEMS

Military Matters

Military history is a proud part of the town's heritage, as the first settlers to the town were largely Revolutionary War veterans or sons of veterans. Solon has been represented in every war that the United States has fought; from three in the Spanish American War to one hundred and forty-four in the Civil War.

As no data other than the dates of the tours of duties of these soldiers exist, it will only be possible to give lists of those who served in the wars of our nation.

Solon was well represented in the Revolutionary War. Following is the list of Revolutionary soldiers who settled in Solon.¹⁴⁷

William Hunnewell
William Hilton
Enoch Jackman
David Pierce
Moses Chamberlain
Mathew Sanborn
Jonathan Bosworth
Joseph Maynard

Luther Pierce¹⁴⁸
Thomas Hunnewell
Caleb Hobart
Benjamin Patten
Stephen Merrill
Solomon Russell
Joseph Shedd

Solon was represented in the War of 1812 by David Whipple, Luther Pierce, Simon Maynard, Amherst Spofford and John Moore.¹⁴⁹

One hundred and forty-four men of Solon answered the call of duty during the Civil War. There are sixty-

¹⁴⁷ Davis, *Op. cit.*, p. 19. (The list is from this source).

¹⁴⁸ Luther Pierce is the only one of the list who is not buried in Solon.

¹⁴⁹ Davis, *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

three known Civil War graves in the town.¹⁵⁰ It seems unnecessary, here, to list all those who participated. But, it should be mentioned that these one hundred and forty-four men came from a town with a population of around one thousand. This certainly shows the patriotism and spirit of the town at such a crucial point in the country's history, which was very typical of the response all over the state.

The Spanish-American War saw only three men from Solon as participants — Gene Merrill, Emerson Joy, and George Lake. All of these men are buried in cemeteries in town.¹⁵¹

The town had thirty-three participants in the First World War. These soldiers came from many varied occupations; one was Principal of Solon High School, one a stenographer, a pipefitter, a watch repairman, a physician, a vice-president of a tool and hardware company, and many farmers and students. Four of these soldiers are buried in the town cemeteries. Sidney Keene and Albert Moody died in service.¹⁵²

Solon was represented in World War II by no less than one hundred and four men and women. Families having three and four sons and daughters in the Service were not uncommon. This was the first war that any record appears in which women from Solon were participants. These women were Virginia Corson, Mavourette George, Vivian McAllister, Sereen Nottage, Pearl Shepardson, Carolyn and Pauline Waugh.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁵² Florence W. Danforth, *Somerset County in the World War*, pp. 312-20.

Leolon Buck, Mahlon Parsons, and Colby Waugh died while in the Service.¹⁵³

Without a doubt, the Waugh family stands out as the town's greatest contributor to the war effort of the United States military. No less than two daughters and five sons of Mr. and Mrs. John Waugh participated in the Second World War. Colby Waugh is buried in Arlington Cemetery in Virginia.

Organizations

For many people the most important part of the social life of any small community is its fraternal organizations. Solon is no exception to this statement. Many of these organizations were founded as early as the mid-nineteenth century and have continued to the present to provide inspiration, enjoyment, and fellowship, for the people of Solon.

Keystone Lodge No. 80, A. F. and A. M. was instituted at Solon on June 27, 1855. Oliver Hilton was a member of this lodge for fifty-one years, and has the distinction of attending more Masonic meetings and funerals than any other member connected with the lodge.¹⁵⁴ Many men of this lodge have taken the thirty-second degree of the Masonic Lodge, which is the highest degree of the order. At the present, there are around one hundred and twenty members. Many of these members are from other towns in the surrounding areas.

Solon Lodge No. 128, I.O.O.F. was formed October 4, 1892. Dr. Leon S. Merrill of this lodge was

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Masonic Records.

elevated to the office of Grand Sire of the Sovereign Lodge of Odd Fellows at an annual convention held at Hot Springs, Arkansas. He was the first in Maine and only the second in New England to be thus honored. At the time of his death he was serving as Dean of the Agricultural Department at the University of Maine.¹⁵⁵

North Somerset Grange No. 218 was organized in 1876 by Ansel Holway of Skowhegan. The first meeting was held in the Fred Rancourt Building just below the present barber shop. From there they moved to the old Masonic Hall for their meetings. The present Grange Hall was completed in 1909 and has been the meeting place for the Grangers ever since. A steady increase in membership was halted by the Grange Store, which proved an unprofitable venture and was given up, probably, in the early part of the twentieth century. The present Juvenile Grange was organized in 1953.¹⁵⁶

The Farm Bureau was established in 1922 and is now known as the Extension Association. This group is subordinate to the state and county groups, which are usually trained by graduates of the University of Maine. The 4H Club was formed at the same time as the Farm Bureau and still continues its work in preparing the future home-makers of the town.

The organization meeting for the Keystone Chapter No. 78 of the Order of Eastern Star was held in 1901 with thirty members present. This organization is an auxiliary of the Masonic Lodge. Life membership has been given to twelve members. The present member-

¹⁵⁵ I.O.O.F. Records.

¹⁵⁶ Grange Records.

ship of the chapter is two hundred and thirteen, most of whom are from other towns.¹⁵⁷

The organization meeting of Northern Light Rebekah Lodge No. 76 was held in 1896 with ninety-one candidates present from Solon and the surrounding towns.¹⁵⁸ The present membership numbers slightly over a hundred.

The Abigail Chamberlain Whipple Chapter of the D.A.R. was established in 1908, with twenty-two members. Among the projects completed before its disbandment were the marking of graves of Revolutionary War soldiers, placing a marker at Arnold's Landing at Caratunk Falls, and placing another marker at the old homestead of Solon's first settler. The group was disbanded in 1950 because of lack of interest and lack of sufficient membership.

The Solon Woman's Club was organized in 1905. This group was busy for many years organizing and operating a library which later became the Solon Public Library. This club is still very active in town improvement activities.

For several years there were groups of Royal Neighbors and Modern Woodmen, both of which were insurance orders. Also, Boy and Girl Scout troops have existed at different periods, but are not active now.

Newspapers

There were only two newspapers published in Solon according to all existing records. One was the *Solon Advertiser*, which was printed in the 1870's. The other

¹⁵⁷ Masonic Records.

¹⁵⁸ I.O.O.F. Records.

was the *Solon Weekly Times*, which existed in the 1890's. Since 1900 there has been no local newspaper in Solon. *The Waterville Morning Sentinel* and *The Bangor Daily News* are the two papers most commonly read by the residents of Solon.

Cemeteries

Before the establishment of the larger cemeteries the early settlers set aside a plot of land on each homestead for burial grounds. This explains the great number of small cemeteries found throughout the township.

There are four cemeteries within the township which have had organized associations. The oldest of these is the Pierce Cemetery having a tombstone dating 1802, recording the death of Tilson Bosworth. The cemetery gets its name from Sarah B. Pierce, who deeded the land to the cemetery association.

The South Solon Burial Ground Corporation met in 1833 to obtain a suitable piece of land for a graveyard. In 1901 a perpetual fund was raised the interest of which was to be used for care of grounds and fence. In 1939 a receiving tomb was built with money willed by Luther Hunnewell. This cemetery is in very good repair at the present time.¹⁵⁹

The Solon Village Cemetery Corporation met for its first meeting in 1870, when one hundred and fifty dollars was raised to fence the area. Various trust funds have been received, the interest being used for perpetual care of designated lots.¹⁶⁰ At present the

¹⁵⁹ From an article "Cemeteries" written by Amy Jewett Dean for the Solon Sesquicentennial.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

cemetery, located just above the North Church, is in excellent condition due to the careful attention by the sextons.

The Evergreen Cemetery, located about a mile and a half below the village, was incorporated in 1870 as the Maplegrove Cemetery. In 1881 it was voted to change the name to its present one. In 1884 the price of lots was five dollars; in 1925 the fee was raised to one hundred dollars. This income was used for care of the lots.¹⁶¹

Library History

The first move to form a public library in Solon was by the Woman's Club in 1906. The members borrowed books from the State Library in Augusta and solicited books from townspeople. These books were placed in the store now owned by Roger Heald. The next building to house the library was what is now the barber shop. Interested citizens furnished bookcases, lamps, chairs, and stoves for the library.¹⁶²

The Woman's Club supported the library from their treasury until 1908, when the town appropriated one hundred dollars to establish a library, to which the State contributed fifty dollars worth of books. It was then known as the Solon Public Library. The Woman's Club turned over to the library its collection of four hundred and seventy-five volumes. By 1914 the number of volumes was increased to one thousand three hundred and forty-one.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Information from Mrs. Cross, past librarian of the Coolidge Library.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

In 1926 the building in which the library was located was rented to the Farmers' Telephone Company and the library was transferred to a vacant room in the school building.

Six years later, on November 18, 1932, the four thousand volumes found a permanent home on South Main Street in a newly-constructed building. This was made possible by the late Fred Coolidge, a native of Solon, whose will contained a bequest of \$25,000 "for the erection and equipping of a library to be deeded to the town of Solon, with the provision that the money, after all expenses of construction were paid, be invested and the income there from derived used for maintenance."¹⁶⁴

The Coolidge Library now contains seven thousand volumes and many periodicals. There have been twelve librarians since 1932, with the present librarian being Mrs. Perry Burbank. The library is open only two days a week; on Tuesday and Saturday.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

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Civil War Veterans

Pvt. Lewis Andrews
3rd Lt. R. O. Bacheller
Corp. Francis E. Baker
Pvt. Sylvester P. Baker
Musi. George S. Beal
Musi. Timothy C. Beal
Pvt. David F. Bean
Pvt. Alonzo Bosworth
Pvt. Michael Bosworth
Pvt. Elisha Brown
Pvt. Elihu A. Brown
Sgt. Henry Butler
2nd Lt. Joseph S. Chase
Pvt. Henry R. Clark
Pvt. Horace D. Clark
Pvt. Mathew N. S. Clark
Pvt. Othello Clark
Pvt. Seth W. Clark
Pvt. Warren E. Clark
Pvt. Franklin B. Cobb
Qm. Sgt. Nathan V. Cook
Pvt. Coloston Cross
Pvt. Carlton Cross
Pvt. Hannibal Cross
Cpt. Lewis Cross, Jr.
Pvt. Hiram Daggett
Pvt. Samuel Daggett
 Lorestine Danforth
Pvt. Selden A. Davis
Pvt. Nathaniel Dawin
Pvt. John A. Dunn
Pvt. Jeremiah Durgin
Pvt. Joseph P. Durgin
Corp. Daniel O. Fee
Pvt. John G. Forsyth
Pvt. Peter Frazier
Pvt. Robert Free
Rev. Joseph P. French
Chap. Luther T. French
Capt. Moses French
Cpl. Oliver French
Pvt. Thurston Gilbert
Pvt. Elbridge G. Gordon
Cpl. Charles W. Hall
Pvt. Elijah G. Hall
Sgt. George W. Hall
Cpl. Royal Hall
Pvt. Peter Hannon
Pvt. Eastman Hathorn
Pvt. Franklin Hathorn
Pvt. George W. Harville
Pvt. Columbus Hayford
2nd Lt. Alden Heald
Pvt. Samuel Heald
Pvt. Warren Heald
Pvt. Eugene Hinkley
Pvt. Charles A. Holmes
Asst. Surg. Jonathan Houghton
Pvt. David Hunnewell

Pvt. Herman Hunnewell
Pvt. Isaiah S. Hunnewell
Sgt. Randall Hunnewell
Pvt. Sumner Hunnewell
Saddler Oliver W. Irish
Pvt. John A. Jackman
Pvt. William C. Jackson
Pvt. Walter S. Jewett
Pvt. Ruel Jewett
Wagoner Elijah D. Johnson
Pvt. John Johnson
Pvt. Llewellyn Jones
Pvt. Ruel B. Jones
Pvt. Thomas Kelley
Pvt. Joseph C. Langley
Pvt. Abraham Manchester
Pvt. George H. Mayberry
Pvt. Sylvanus Maxim
Pvt. James McCollor
Pvt. John McCollor
Pvt. Michael McCollor
Pvt. Peter McCollor
Pvt. Phineas McCollor
Pvt. Thomas McCollor
Pvt. Manney McFadden
Pvt. Henry McIntire
 James McLaughlin
Pvt. Joseph McNeely
Pvt. Calvin F. Merrill
Pvt. Henry O. Merrill
Pvt. John Merrill
Pvt. Charles S. Morse
Pvt. Melvin N. Murphy
Pvt. Patrick Newman
Cpl. Hiram Norton
Sgt. Charles E. Parkman
Cpl. Ruel Parkman
Pvt. William H. Parkman
Pvt. William Phillips
Capt. John L. Pierce
Pvt. Ephraim Pomeroy
Pvt. Fernando Pomeroy
Pvt. Daniel H. Raymond
Pvt. John Riley
Pvt. Charles E. Roberts
Sgt. David Rowell, Jr.
1st Lt. Levi D. Rowell
Cpl. George Royal
Pvt. Moses P. Royal
Pvt. Sullivan Russell
Pvt. Frank Safford
Pvt. Henry Sands
Capt. Elbridge G. Savage
Pvt. Reuben Savage, Jr.
1st Lt. William H. Savage
Pvt. Charles L. Scribner
Pvt. Alphonzo Shattuck
Pvt. William Shattuck
Pvt. Francis P. Sheridan

Pvt. Thomas Slyney
 Qm. Sgt. George P. Smith
 Pvt. Henry A. Smith
 Pvt. Thomas Smith
 Pvt. Joseph Stevens
 Pvt. Warren A. Southards
 Pvt. James C. Sullivan
 Pvt. William Sumerly
 Pvt. Adelbert M. Thompson
 Sgt. Danville Thompson
 Pvt. Eastman Thompson, Jr.
 Pvt. Erastus Thompson
 Pvt. Daniel C. Thurston
 Pvt. Gilbert Thurston

Sgt. Leander F. Thurston
 Pvt. John W. Walker
 4th Lt. George S. Webb
 Cpl. Amos Wentworth, Jr.
 Pvt. Albert J. Williams
 Pvt. Benj. J. Williams
 Pvt. A. B. Williams
 Pvt. Augustus B. Wilson
 Pvt. John L. Wilson
 Pvt. Joseph H. Wilson
 Capt. William W. Witham
 Pvt. Abner Wyman
 Pvt. Irvin S. Young

World War I Veterans

Blaisdell, Joseph E.
 Boynton, Frank M.
 Collins, Henry
 Drew, Walter J.
 Dyer, Jene
 Dyer, Ivan M.
 Forbus, Sherwin R.
 Gerrish, Clarence M.
 Heald, Eldred C.
 Hewett, Chester A.
 Jackson, Elbert I.

Jewett, Hazen L.
 Jewett, Myron C.
 *Keene, Sidney
 Kelley, Donald A.
 Mahoney, Merle J.
 Marcue, Peter J.
 McClintick, Owen
 McGraw, Alfred C.
 Merrill, Edward C.
 *Moody, Albert F.
 Moody, Earl C.

Piper, John O.
 Priest, Conan
 Robinson, Alston H.
 Robinson, Thomas J.
 Rowell, LeRoy A.
 Severy, Charles
 Spaulding, Earl
 Stred, Emil P.
 Stred, Harry
 Waugh, Everett H.
 Wiley, David

*Died in Service

Solon Boys and Girls in World War II

Abbey, Clifford	Greenlaw, Harry Jr.	Padham, Norris
Adams, Archie Jr.	Greenlaw, Llewellyn	*Parsons, Mahlon
Adams, Clayton	Hall, Kenneth	Parsons, Marcus
Adams, Erlon	Hayes, Everard	Piper, Stanwood
Berube, Lewis	Heald, Arthur	Rancourt, William
Berube, Norman	Heald, Roger	Rickards, Carroll
Boardman, Harold	Heath, Everett	Rollins, Arlington
Boardman, Robert	Hunnewell, Omar	Rowell, Jasper
Boynton, Lewis	Hutchinson, Alger	Shepardson, Arno
Boynton, Frederick	Kelley, Robert	Shepardson, Pearl
Brown, Leland	Kiger, Merle	Spaulding, Ralph
Brown, Olon	Jackson, Wilfred	Starbird, Albert
*Buck, Leolen	Later, George	Sylvester, David
Buzzell, Clarence	Lawrence, Augustus	Sylvester, Julian Jr.
Clark, Cecil	Lawrence, Cecil	Sylvester, Maurice
Corson, Ralph Jr.	Lawrence, John Jr.	Tewksbury, Harland
Corson, Virginia	Lebens, Millett	Tewksbury, Harold
Crotto, Joseph	Lohnes, Raymond	Tozier, Keith
Davis, Carroll	Longevin, William	Tozier, Orman
Davis, Harrison	Matson, Donald	Waugh, Carolyn
Dolan, John	McAllister, Elywin	*Waugh, Colby
Dolan, William	McAllister, Glendon	Waugh, Malcolm
Forbus, Raymond	McAllister, Loren	Waugh, Merrill
Forbus, Roland,	McAllister, Robert	Waugh, Norman
Forbus, Walter	McAllister, Telford	Waugh, Pauline
Foss, Glenn D.	McAllister, Vivian	Waugh, Robert
French, Carlton	McCarty, Bernard	Wilson, Henry
French, Clayton	McCarty, Roland	Wilson, Sidney
French, Leeman	McCarty, Thomas B.	Withers, Abbott
Gehrke, Kenneth	McQuilkin, Ernest	Withers, Chester
Gehrke, Robert	Nottage, Sereen	Withers, Clifford
George, Mavourette	O'Hara Floyd	Withers, Stuart
Gleason, Douglas	Padham, Earl	Worster, Donald
Gleason, Frank Jr.	Padham, Elwood	Worster, Ernest
Goodrich, Gerald	Padham, Erroll	

*Died while in service

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